

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 COME-00 HA-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /065 W

-----077623 220209Z /70

R 211010Z NOV 77

FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5582

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TAIPEI 6967

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TW

SUBJECT: NOVEMBER 19 LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS

1. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: IN THE NOVEMBER 19 LOCAL ELECTIONS INDEPENDENT (I.E. NON-KMT) CANDIDATES MADE UNPRECEDENTED GAINS AND AS A RESULT, DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED. ALSO, IT WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE GROC IN THE FUTURE TO TIGHTEN CONTROLS AND INSIST ON TOTAL ADHERENCE TO THE KMT PARTY-LINE EITHER IN THE PROCESS OF WEATHERING NORMALIZATION OR FOR ANY OTHER REASON SHORT OF AN IMMINENT THREAT TO THE ISLAND'S SECURITY. KMT ORGANIZATION AND DISCIPLINE ARE ALSO THREATENED AND LIKELY TO WEAKEN FURTHER AND BECAUSE OF ELECTIONRESULTS SOME PARTY HEADS MAY ROLL.

2. THE MOST IMPORTANT OFFICES AT STAKE IN THIS, THE BIGGEST ELECTION EVER ON TAIWAN, WERE THE TWENTY POSITIONS AS MAYORS
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AND COUNTY MAGISTRATES. INDEPENDENTS WON FOUR OF THESE: TAICHUNG CITY, TAINAN CITY, KAOHSIUNG COUNTY AND TAOYUAN COUNTY. THE REACES IN TAINAN AND TAOYUAN WERE THE PARTY'S MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGES, AND IT GAVE SUBSTANTIALLY MORE ATTENTION TO THEM. THE VICTORS--SU NAN-CHENG IN TAINAN AND HSU HSIN-LIANG IN TAOYUAN--ARE BOTH FORMER KMT MEMBERS: HSU WAS EXPELLED ONLY A MONTH AGO FOR REGISTERING FOR THE ELECTION

WITHOUT THE PARTY'S NOMINATION. HSU'S OVERWHELMING DEFEAT OF THE KMT CANDIDATE (235,946 TO 147,851) IS THE PARTY'S BIGGEST BLACK EYE.

3. THE NEXT MOST IMPORTANT OFFICES AT STAKE WERE THOSE OF PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLYMEN. THE KMT WON FIFTY-SIX SEATS, AND INDEPENDENTS WON TWENTY-ONE. AMONG THE INDEPENDENTS, SURPRISING VICTORIES WERE WON BY LIN I-HSIUNG IN ILAN AND CHANG CHUN-HUNG IN NANTOU. BOTH LIN AND CHANG HAVE BEEN FIXTURES OF THE TAIPEI OPPOSITIONIST SCENE FOR SOME TIME. LIN, A LAWYER, RETURNED TO ILAN, WHERE HE HAD BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH KUO YU-HSIN'S EARLIER CAMPAIGNS, AND USED KUO'S OLD MACHINE TO GET HIMSELF ELECTED. CHANG, WHOSE EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITIES ON THE TAIWAN POLITICAL REVIEW AND NEW GENERATION SHOW HIM TO BE THE MOST INTELLECTUAL OF THE OPPOSITIONISTS, HAD SURPRISINGLY LITTLE TROUBLE IN CONVINCING THE HAYSEEDS OF HIS NATIVE NANTOU COUNTY TO VOTE FOR HIM DESPITE HIS LONG ABSENCE FROM HOME.

4. IN ELECTIONS OF LESSER IMPORTANCE, THE KMT WON 711 OF THE COUNTY/CITY COUNCIL SEATS (VERSUS 145 SEATS TO INDEPENDENTS AND ONE TO A YOUNG CHINA PARTY MAN), AND 292 OF THE HSIANG/CHEN CHIEFTANCIES (VERSUS 21 TO INDEPENDENTS). THE KMT ALSO WON 43 SEATS IN THE TAIPEI MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY (VERSUS 8 SEATS TO INDEPENDENTS). VOTER TURN-OUT IN ALL ELECTIONS AVERAGED 70 PERCENT IN TAIPEI AND 80 PERCENT ELSEWHERE.
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5. THE ELECTIONS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN UNPRECEDENTEDLY FAIR. THE PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT MADE REPEATED CALLS FOR FAIRNESS, AND SPECIAL COURTS WERE SET UP TO HANDLE CHARGES OF ELECTION IRREGULARITIES. INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES WERE ALSO GENERALLY MORE EXPERIENCED, ALERT, AND DETERMINED TO USE THE LAW TO INSURE FAIRNESS. AS A RESULT, THE CHANCES OF ANY IRREGULARITIES BEING EXPOSED WAS SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER THAN IN PREVIOUS ELECTIONS.

6. WE ARE AWARE OF ONLY TWO INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE ASSOCIATED WITH THE ELECTIONS, BOTH OF THEM IN TAOYUAN COUNTY ON ELECTION DAY. ALTHOUGH DETAILS ARE FAR FROM CLEAR (AND WE EXPECT TO LEARN MORE IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS), IT APPEARS THAT A POLICE SUB-STATION IN CHUNGLI WAS PARTIALLY BURNED BY A MOB (VARIOUSLY ESTIMATED AT FROM 4,000 TO 10,000) WHICH WAS AGITATED BY ALLEGED BALLOTING PROBLEMS INVOLVING AN ELDERLY FARMER. ONE MAN WAS REPORTED INJURED. POLICE REACTED WITH RESTRAINT AND THERE HAVE NOT BEEN ANY REPERCUSSIONS. THE OTHER INCIDENT INVOLVED THE BEATING OF A LOCAL OFFICIAL IN LUNGT'AN FOR REASONS WHICH HAVE GONE UNREPORTED.

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7. KMT ORGANIZATION AND DISCIPLINE WILL CERTAINLY BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE SUCCESS OF KMT MAVERICKS (PARTICULARLY HSU HSIN-LIANG), BY UNPRECEDENTED INDEPENDENT VICTORIES, AND BY THE PARTY'S NOMINATING PROCESS WHICH RESULTED IN WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION AND THE EXPULSION OF THIRTY OR FORTY MEMBERS WHO CHOSE TO PARTICIPATE IN ELECTIONS AGAINST THE PARTY'S WISHES. THE KMT LEADERSHIP WILL HAVE TO TURN IMMEDIATELY TO THESE PROBLEMS AND SOLVING THEM WILL BE DIFFICULT. THERE IS LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERABLE REORGANIZATION OF THE PARTY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, WHERE MOST OF THE BLAME FOR ELECTION LOSSES IS BEING ASSIGNED. PROVINCIAL KMT CHAIRMAN WANG WEI-NUNG MAY WELL HAVE TO GO. HOW THIS WILL AFFECT KMT CENTRAL'S DIRECTOR OF ORGANIZATIONAL AFFAIRS LI HUAN MAKES INTERESTING SPECULATION. LI IS WANG'S BOSS. HE HAS ALSO BEEN CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH, IF NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR, THE KMT'S EFFORT TO RECRUIT YOUNGER, MORE LIBERAL MEMBERS. HSU HSIN-LIANG IS AN EXAMPLE OF ONE OF LI'S FORMER PROTEGES, AND HSU'S APOSTASY MAY WELL

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BE LAID AT LI'S DOOR BY MORE CONSERVATIVE PARTY MEMBERS. NEVERTHELESS, WE EXPECT LI TO WEATHER THE STORM AND HE MAY EVEN BE ABLE TO USE THE PARTY'S ELECTION DEFEATS AS A SUCCESSFUL ARGUMENT FOR GREATER LIBERALIZATION WITHIN THE KMT.

8. THE SUCCESSFUL INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES (THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF WHICH IS TAIWANESE, INCLUDING ALL THE IMPORTANT ONES) WILL HAVE TO SPEND MOST OF NEXT YEAR CONSOLIDATING THEIR POSITIONS AND TENDING TO LOCAL POLITICS. OVER THE LONGER RUN, WE EXPECT MANY OF THEM TO MORE CLOSELY COORDINATE THEIR VIEWS AND ACTIVITIES, PERHAPS EVEN TO FORM AN OPPOSITION PARTY. WHETHER OR NOT THIS, IF IT OCCURS, WILL RESULT IN MORE OPEN DOMESTIC ADVOCACY OF A FUTURE FOR TAIWAN WITHOUT TIES WITH THE MAINLAND REMAINS TO BE SEEN (FOREIGN AFFAIRS WAS NOT AN ISSUE IN THE ELECTIONS) BUT THE GROUND HAS CERTAINLY BEEN PREPARED FOR GROWTH IN THAT DIRECTION. WE WILL BE WATCHING FOR ANY SIGNS OF SUCH ACTIVITY.

9. THE MORE OPEN POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE AND THE GREATER NUMBER OF CRITICAL INDEPENDENTS IN POLITICAL LIFE WILL COMBINE TO MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE GROG TO TIGHTEN DOMESTIC CONTROLS IN THE FUTURE SHOULD IT EVER DECIDE TO DO SO. IN PARTICULAR, MUCH SPECULATION IN THE PAST HAS REVOLVED AROUND THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD TIGHTEN CONTROLS AS A MEANS OF GETTING TAIWAN SAFELY THROUGH NORMALIZATION. FOR IT TO TRY TO DO SO UNDER THE MORE OPEN CONDITIONS WHICH ARE LIKELY TO PREVAIL FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS MAY BE MORE DIFFICULT IF NOT DANGEROUS NOW THAT OPPOSITION HAS HAD A TASTE OF SUCCESS.

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